

VZCZCXRO4664

PP RUEHCN RUEHGH RUEHVC

DE RUEHHK #2237 3471056

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

P 121056Z DEC 08

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6443

INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHHI/AMEMBASSY HANOI PRIORITY 3898

RUEHJA/AMEMBASSY JAKARTA PRIORITY 1767

RUEHKL/AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR PRIORITY 7564

RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1378

RUEHPF/AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH PRIORITY 0833

RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE PRIORITY 3958

RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA PRIORITY

RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

UNCLAS HONG KONG 002237

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/CM, CA/OCS/EAP, AIAG, OES/IHA, MED  
HHS FOR OGHA - STEIGER, HICKEY  
CDC ATLANTA FOR CCID AND COGH

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: AMED EAGR KFLU PINR TBIO HK CH

SUBJECT: AVIAN FLU H5N1 STRAIN CONFIRMED IN HK

REF: HONG KONG 2222

**¶11. (SBU) SUMMARY:** Hong Kong's Health Secretary confirmed on December 11 that the H5 Avian Influenza (AI) virus responsible for the deaths of over 200 chickens on December 9 was the H5N1 strain. No human associated cases of Avian Influenza have been reported. The source of the virus outbreak remains undetermined, but is thought to have originated outside the farm; there is no evidence supporting press speculation it was introduced through fertilized eggs smuggled into Hong Kong. Post AI Working Group (AIWG) met December 12 and confirmed that medical stocks were inventoried and appropriate Consular Warden messages were up to date. END SUMMARY.

**¶12. (SBU)** Hong Kong Health Secretary Dr. York Chow has confirmed that the December 9 H5 Avian Influenza outbreak in a large commercial farm in Hong Kong is the H5N1 strain. There have been no reported or suspected human-associated AI cases in Hong Kong; as a precaution, six farm workers from the original contamination site have been placed in isolation at a local hospital for monitoring, but remain asymptomatic (Reftel). According to press reporting, Chow said extensive testing at markets and other farms across the territory have turned up negative, suggesting the outbreak has been contained. Although unable to confirm the virus source, Chow stated the outbreak is not likely to have originated inside the farm and there was no evidence to suggest the virus was introduced through smuggled fertilized eggs, as some poultry industry insiders are suggesting. Chow appealed to anyone in the industry with knowledge of egg smuggling to come forward so the allegations may be aggressively investigated.

**¶13. (SBU)** In light of the H5N1 confirmation, the Consulate General convened a meeting of the Avian Influenza Working Group (AIWG) on December 12 to discuss the week's developments and review the Consulate's AI response planning and procedures. The Medical Unit reported stocks of antiviral medications, masks, sanitizers, and other materials were recently inventoried and the health unit is well-stocked at recommended levels. The Consular section reported that it released a Warden Message on December 10 notifying the AMCIT community in Hong Kong of the virus discovery and providing additional information and websites where citizens could go for updates.

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